

classify a tipped worker? How do we do that? If a person makes more than \$30 a month in tips, a person can be classified as a tipped worker. Think about that—if a person makes more than \$30 a month. So if a person works 5 days a week for a month, that is \$1.50 a day. If a person makes more than \$1.50 a day in tips, a person can be classified as a tipped worker and be paid \$2.13 an hour. We look at that and say that can't be right. But it is right. That is exactly what is happening.

Tipped workers are getting to be at the bottom of the barrel. Yet we rely upon them for so many things—people pushing wheelchairs in the airport, valet attendants, parking attendants. There are a lot of people who are classified as tipped workers if they make more than \$30 a month in tips—\$1.50 a day. Think about that—\$1.50 a day. They get that, they get classified as a tipped worker, and they can be paid \$2.13 an hour.

So, again, the time has come. The people of America understand this. Working families understand it. This is a civil rights bill. It is a women's issue bill. I say it is a civil rights bill because if we look at the people who are going to get benefits—13 million people—28 percent of African-American workers, 32 percent of Hispanic workers, 19 percent of Asian and other workers will get a raise. This is a civil rights bill. It is a women's issue bill because 55 percent of the people in America making low wages who will get a raise are women. It is a children's issue. Kids who aren't getting adequate health care and nutrition and childcare are the kids of people making the minimum wage or tipped wages, even less. So it is a civil rights issue, it is a women's issue, it is a kids issue, and it is an economic issue for America.

It is time to give America a raise and raise the minimum wage.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

JOBS

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I come to the floor today to talk about jobs. Once again, this week the Senate is taking up an extension of unemployment benefits, which will be the 13th such extension since 2008.

Arguably, of course, we came out of an economic downturn and a lot of people were hurt by that; a lot of people were in need of help and assistance. Yet here we are, 6 years later, and we are still talking about extending unemployment benefits. Why? Because we haven't created enough jobs necessary to get the people who have been unemployed for a period of time back to work. Once again we have Senate Democrats ignoring the real issue, which is the lack of jobs that has left so many Americans struggling to find work.

The solution to years of high unemployment is not perpetual extensions of

unemployment benefits but the creation of new jobs—steady, good-paying jobs with the opportunity for advancement. Workers don't want to spend years on meager government benefits; they want to return to work. But in order for that to happen, there have to be jobs available, and there haven't been too many jobs over the past 5 years.

That is why Republicans have proposed a number of amendments to the unemployment insurance legislation that would remove obstacles to job creation and encourage businesses to expand and hire new workers. Unfortunately, Democrats have shown little interest in job creation over the past 5 years, so they are happy to extend unemployment benefits 13 times in 6 years, but they are unwilling to actually do anything to treat the causes of unemployment and to help hurting workers get the jobs they are looking for.

In fact, Democrats' record on job creation has been pretty dismal.

There was the stimulus bill, which completely failed to bring about the economic growth the President promised.

There are thousands of new regulations the administration has placed on businesses which stifle job creation.

The backdoor national energy tax which the EPA is trying to put on power companies in this country is going to be passed on. People across this country who can least afford it are going to be looking at much higher utility bills.

We have the Keystone Pipeline, which has generated open hostility from Members on the other side, and of course we know that has immediate job creation potential. The Keystone Pipeline, according to the President's own State Department, would create 22,000 shovel-ready jobs, which could become available as soon as we get the pipeline approved.

Of course, there is the ObamaCare legislation, passed several years ago, which continues to wreak havoc on job creation in this country. Chief among the burdens ObamaCare places on business is the employer mandate, which requires all businesses with 50 or more full-time workers, which the administration defines as 30 hours or more a week, to provide government-approved health insurance or to pay a fine.

That is financially impossible for thousands of nonprofits and businesses with small profit margins such as restaurants. As a result, many of these businesses are being forced to cut workers' hours below 30 hours a week to reduce the number of full-time employees on their books. And when they hire new workers, they are hiring part-time—not full-time—employees.

The employer mandate is also discouraging a lot of small businesses from hiring at all. Businesses that planned to expand are now deciding they will be safer financially if they keep their businesses below 50 employ-

ees. As a result, many new jobs are simply not being created.

Then there is the costly tax on life-saving medical devices such as pacemakers and insulin pumps. This ObamaCare tax, which is so economically damaging that it is opposed by many Democrats as well as Republicans, has already affected more than 300,000 jobs in the medical device industry. If the tax is not repealed soon, many more jobs in the industry will be lost entirely or sent overseas.

Ultimately, the Congressional Budget Office estimates that ObamaCare will result in up to 2.5 million fewer full-time workers. On top of that, the Budget Committee estimates the law will reduce wages by more than \$1 trillion.

Right now more than 10 million Americans are unemployed. Nearly 4 million of them have been unemployed for more than 6 months. Perpetually extending unemployment benefits does not fix that problem. We need to start creating jobs.

I have an amendment to the legislation before us. It is called the Solutions to Long-Term Unemployment Act. It includes four commonsense measures that would support the unemployed and make it easier and cheaper for employers to hire new workers.

For starters, my amendment would provide direct support to unemployed workers by offering a one-time, low-interest loan of up to \$10,000 to allow an individual who has been out of work for 6 months or longer to relocate to a city or State that has a lower unemployment rate.

Unemployment rates vary substantially across the United States. My home State of South Dakota, for example, has an unemployment rate of 3.6 percent, which is far below the national average. We have a hard time in my State of South Dakota, believe it or not, in actually finding workers to fill the jobs. I talk to employers all the time in my State who are trying to find people to fill the jobs that are available in South Dakota.

So moving to a State with a low unemployment rate can substantially increase workers' chances of getting a job. Unfortunately, most long-term unemployed Americans lack the means to pack up and move to a new city or State.

My amendment would help ensure that lack of resources does not prevent Americans from heading out to where the jobs are.

My amendment also would support workers by cleaning up the mess that is Federal worker training programs. Currently, there are more than 50—50—worker training programs spread across nine different Federal bureaucracies. Needless to say, that leads to a lot of duplication. And worse, a majority of these programs have never been evaluated to see if they actually work.

My amendment would consolidate 35 of these programs into one streamlined

program and move control to the States. With every State facing different unemployment challenges, trying to administer a one-size-fits-all program from Washington makes absolutely no sense. Putting States in control would allow each State to tailor its workforce training programs to the needs of its own citizens.

My amendment would also provide two incentives to encourage businesses to hire the long-term unemployed.

First, my amendment would permanently exempt long-term unemployed workers from ObamaCare's requirement that businesses with 50 or more workers provide government-approved health care to their employees or pay a fine.

Many employers want to hire more workers but they are afraid. They are afraid of the financial hit their businesses will take if they end up subject to ObamaCare's costly mandate. My amendment would allow businesses to hire those new workers without that fear.

This idea recently gained broad bipartisan support in the House of Representatives. The House has acted on a similar measure to exempt veterans from the ObamaCare employer mandate headcount. That measure passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 406 to 1. That is a strong indication that we need to provide relief from ObamaCare's costly mandates to ensure those who need and want to work are able to find good jobs.

I am confident that if the majority leader would allow this provision to get a vote on the Senate floor, we would see a similar outcome that would benefit long-term unemployed individuals.

Finally, my amendment would provide another hiring incentive by granting a 6-month payroll tax holiday for each long-term unemployed worker that a business hires. For an employer hiring a worker that is making \$40,000, that 6-month payroll holiday means a savings of \$1,240.

If it is the Senate's will to extend these benefits, Republicans want to ensure this extension is paired with the kind of help that will actually ensure we do not have to extend unemployment benefits a 14th or a 15th time. That is why we are here offering measures to address the root cause of unemployment—the lack of jobs.

It is vital that we stop putting band-aids over the problem and start focusing on solutions. Democrats may not have made job creation a priority for the last 5 years, but they can start making it a priority today. And they can do that by the majority leader allowing votes on Republican proposals to make it easier and less expensive to create jobs.

We just heard—we keep hearing—proposals that are being brought to the floor by Democrats that will drive up the cost of doing business, make it harder, create more obstacles to hiring people and to creating jobs. The proposed 40-percent increase in the min-

imum wage, for example—I have visited with employers in my State of South Dakota, small employers. I had a meeting with employers, where the size of their businesses range from 30 employees up to about 200 employees, all of whom concluded that an increase of that magnitude in the minimum wage would make it much harder for them to grow their businesses and to create jobs.

The Congressional Budget Office estimated that raising the minimum wage would cost our economy up to 1 million jobs. Why? Because it makes it more expensive, more difficult for employers to create those jobs and to hire new workers. As a consequence, there are fewer jobs that get created in our economy.

Well, if the goal is to lift people into the middle class, to get more people to work, I do not know why we would look at policies that have proven in the past to make it more difficult to create jobs and cost us jobs in our economy. And we have the Congressional Budget Office saying it would cost us up to 1 million jobs and also raise costs for people in this country; in other words, the things people have to buy. It would raise prices for the things people have to rely on in their daily lives.

Those are the types of things we continue to hear from the other side—proposals that, frankly, sound good and maybe poll well but when you really get down to brass tacks do not get the job done. And clearly, the object is creating jobs—something we have not done here now for 5 years because we consistently get policies from our Democratic colleagues and from the President that drive up the cost of doing business, drive up the cost of hiring new employees, put more obstacles in the way of job creation, instead of putting policies in place that we know—that we know—will create jobs, good-paying jobs, and give people an opportunity for advancement that will help lift them into the middle class.

We can do it. It is high time we did it. I hope, again, that the majority leader will allow votes this week on Republican proposals—and there are many of them here—that actually will make it easier and less expensive to create jobs in this country. It is long past time that we start providing real help for the unemployed.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SCHATZ). The Senator from Indiana.

UNEMPLOYMENT EXTENSION

Mr. COATS. Mr. President, I would like to discuss the legislation currently under consideration. But I want to begin by briefly discussing how we arrived at this point.

In January, I was one of a few on our side of the aisle who voted to begin debate on the bill to extend unemployment insurance benefits. I said at the time—and I still believe today—that the Senate should have a full and open

debate on this important issue, a debate that includes consideration of modifications and changes to the program.

The President, after all, said the program needs reforms. This is an opportunity to implement those reforms.

Members on both sides of the aisle—Republicans and Democrats—have acknowledged the need for reforms. So my vote to consider this legislation early on, when it came up, was not about supporting or opposing an extension of the emergency unemployment insurance program, but it was about initiating a debate on this important topic and setting the stage for both sides to work together to find a credible way of paying for this extension, if it was granted, and having responsible reforms in terms of amending or changing the current law so we could avoid some of the duplication and some of the misuse of funds that go into this particular program.

So those two things—a responsible pay-for and measures to reform the program—were critical. I felt that was the debate we needed and, in fact, we did have a bipartisan discussion back and forth with the caucus on our side of the aisle and the caucus on the other side.

It is clear that we have gotten to the point where not all of us are happy with the result that came forward. I see my colleague from Nevada Senator HELLER on the floor. No one could have been a better leader in terms of pulling the group together, working to find a sensible solution to this issue. I commend him for the efforts he has made.

However, I am disappointed in not having the ability to offer amendments when a bill comes to the floor, and being shut down by the majority leader who simply says: I am going to use Senate procedures—some of them arcane procedures—to deny the opposing party any opportunity to include their ideas, their thoughts, their amendments in the process.

Throughout the discussion we have had with our colleagues across the aisle in trying to form a consensus and bring the bill forward, some of us were disappointed that those items that we offered, that we thought were reasonable, were not included in the final version.

You do not always get everything you want. But nevertheless, at least around here you used to be able to go down to the floor and say: I want to give my colleagues a shot at hearing what my amendment tries to accomplish, and allow it a vote. And if you win, you win; if you lose, you lose. In the end, you look at the total package, as amended—or at least as attempted to be amended—and make a decision: Do I want to support this or not support this?

That is the position we were in, and I had what I thought were two reasonable requests. One was prohibiting the simultaneous collection of Social Security disability insurance and receiving unemployment insurance.